

REMARKS

Applicants recently responded to an Office Action dated November 3, 2003 (paper no. 44). A reference was cited in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), U.S. Patent No. 6,136,533. This patent claims the benefit of three provisional applications, only one of which predates the priority filing date of the present application. U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/052,721 was filed on July 3, 1997, and Applicants' priority date is August 20, 1997.

Applicants have reviewed U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/052,721, which was unavailable to Applicants at the time the response to the November 3, 2003 Office Action was filed. A copy of this application is enclosed herewith as Exhibit A for the Examiner's review. The disclosure referred to by the Examiner in the Office Action, column 13, lines 45-67, was not present in the originally-filed provisional application and thus does not predate the filing of the present application.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on U.S. Patent No. 6,136,533.

CONCLUSION

If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 367592000100. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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Respectfully submitted,

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